



Game Report



Lioness returning to her den in the Kapen River by Ranger Jaco Joubert

MalaMala Game Reserve
April 2023

It's all about the wildlife!

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	35	29	Maximum	95	84
Minimum	15	20	Minimum	59	67
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
1.5		0.06		2	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	103
Leopard	102
Elephant	130
Buffalo	51
Cheetah	15
Cape Hunting Dog	10

**Sightings are tallied by day and not by drive. E.g., an individual leopard seen during the morning and afternoon drive on the same day is regarded as a single sighting.*

KILL STATS	
Lion	1 buffalo, 7 impalas, 1 warthog, 3 wildebeest, 2 scrub hare
Leopard	7 impalas
Cheetah	1 impala
Cape Hunting Dog	1 impala

**AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS*

LION PRIDES

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 29

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 10 YEARS 1 MONTH
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 10 MONTHS
6 YOUNG ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 8 MONTHS
5 YOUNG ADULT MALES	± 4 YEARS 8 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 11 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	3 YEARS 11 MONTHS
2 CUBS	2 YEARS 1 MONTH
11 CUBS	0 YEARS 4 MONTHS

MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON
(59 sightings)

Sightings of this pride have been bountiful this month. Our most dominant pride were seen every day.

Naturally, the cubs are the focus of the pride, and as a result, more than half of the sightings of members of this pride included the newest cohort of young lions. Between the 1st and the 17th, one lioness had two cubs in the area of West Street, while three lionesses denned six cubs in the lower reaches of the Kapen River. The three lionesses moved their cubs north, and from the 17th, all eight cubs have been kept in the Sand River beneath West Street Bridge. The lionesses and cubs were seen on 31 days, 19 of which were at (and on) West Street Bridge. The Ndhzenga males have also been a strong presence at West Street and were seen with their offspring in nearly every sighting.

Other news of this pride from April includes a lioness mating with the Black Dam males around the Mlowathi Spot between the 19th and the 21st. In addition, the lioness and the sub-adult female sired by the Gowrie males were seen towards the end of the month in Matshapiri Open Area. The integration of the sub-adult female and the Ndhzenga males is a gradual process, but as the older female becomes ready to mate, it is essential that her current offspring remains safe.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 18

1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 9 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 6 YEARS 8 MONTHS
4 SUB ADULT MALES	± 3 YEARS 10 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULT FEMALES	± 3 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	3 YEARS 4 MONTHS
7 CUBS	± 2 YEARS 0 MONTHS

WESTERN & CENTRAL EYREFIELD
(3 sightings)

Four sub-adult lions were in the Mlowathi River, south of the Gowrie Boundary, on the 10th. It was a while before lions from this pride were seen again; on the 29th, four sub-adult males, one adult female and one sub-adult female were around Senegal Bush. The same group was just east of where they had been the day before, with a wildebeest bull carcass.

THE SAND RIVER PRIDE = 16

2 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 9 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 3 MONTHS
3 SUB ADULTS (1 FEMALE & 2 MALES)	2 YEARS 8 MONTHS
6 CUBS	1 YEAR 8 MONTHS
2 CUBS	0 YEARS 4 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON
(2 sightings)

Lion sightings, in general, were remarkable this month; as a result, few guides got far enough south to spend time in the territory of this large pride.

The only day they were seen was on the 3rd when we enjoyed two sightings of members of this pride. Two adult females linked up with the Southern Avoca males at dawn just west of Charleston Rock. The rest of the pride, including the youngest cubs, lounged in the sun on Flat Rocks before they moved east towards where the two adult lionesses kept the company of the Southern Avoca males.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 1

1 SUB ADULT FEMALE

MARTHLY

(2 sightings)

4 YEARS 1 MONTH

Months of anticipation have led to this – the Marthly lioness was seen mating with the Black Dam males at Elephant Rock Lookout on the 27th. It is premature to get too excited about the prospects of this pride; however, it is a promising development. The only other time she was seen was on the 16th when she was west of Manyeleti Crossing.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 20

7 ADULT FEMALES

6 ADULT FEMALES

7 CUBS

EASTERN EYREFIELD

(1 sighting)

UNKNOWN AGES

± 7 YEARS 3 MONTHS

± 2 YEARS 8 MONTHS

After months of absence, we enjoyed one day of viewing this pride of lions. On the last day of the month, two adult male lions, four lionesses and at least six cubs were found feeding on the remains of a wildebeest carcass at Clarendon Dam.

MALE LIONS

THE NDHZENGA MALES = 3

1 ADULT MALE

2 ADULT MALES

*WESTERN MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD & CHARLESTON**Dominant over the Kambula and Styx Prides.**First Encountered on MalaMala September 2020*

(24 sightings)

± 8 YEARS 2 MONTHS

± 7 YEARS 9 MONTHS

April brought consistent sightings of the dominant males of the Kambula pride. In 13 of the sightings, members of this coalition were with their youngest offspring. It remains integral that these males create a strong presence around the cubs of the Kambula pride in order to keep any danger at bay.

In addition to numerous sightings with the cubs, the following noteworthy events took place:

- On the 2nd, the smallest of the three males mated with a young member of the Kambula pride at Kapen Open Area.
- On the 21st, a Ndzenga male chased a young male cheetah in the area of Flockfield Tower.

THE NORTHERN AVOCA MALE = 1

1 ADULT MALE

± 9 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

Dominant over the Nkuhuma pride.

First encountered in late 2019.

(0 sightings)

The Northern Avoca male was not seen this month.

THE SOUTHERN AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 10 YEARS 2 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Dominant over the Sand River Pride.

First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve

(1 sighting)

The only day we viewed these males was on the 3rd, when both linked up with Sand River pride members at the confluence of the Sand River and Tjellahanga River.

Other Lions Encountered:

- The **BLACK DAM MALES** (2 Adult males – 5 YEARS 7 MONTHS). These males were seen on 13 days this month. Their sightings were evenly spaced throughout the month. They alternated mating with a lioness from the Nkuhuma and Kambula prides. They are moving as far south as Piccadilly Triangle and advertising their presence with roars and scent marks. In addition to mating with the two prides mentioned above, they also mated with the Marthly lioness on the 27th, hopefully they will take an interest in protecting this lone lioness.
- A **YOUNG NERVOUS MALE** had a buffalo cow kill east of River Rocks on the 3rd.
- Two **UNIDENTIFIED** lions were around Charleston North Crossing on the 17th.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	77 (16 cubs)
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LEOPARDS

FEMALE LEOPARDS:

THE ISLAND FEMALE

10 YEARS 2 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Tamboti female^t, independent first quarter of 2015.

Mother of the Drum Crossing female.

(4 sightings)

In April, there were four days' worth of sightings of the Island female, with notable events occurring on the 15th, 16th and 25th. On the first two days, she was seen with an impala ewe kill around the eastern ramp of Kikilezihash Crossing. On the 25th, she had an altercation with the Kapen female at Styx Crossing. The Island female chased the younger leopard further south, but both leopards were unscathed.

THE DRUM CROSSING FEMALE

2 YEARS 8 MONTHS

SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Island female, independent February 2022.

(0 sightings)

It remains unconfirmed, but rangers reported a sighting of a female leopard that they believed was the Drum Crossing female on the 21st, northeast of Campbell Koppies. Unfortunately, neither of the two rangers could get a clear enough view to confirm whether it was her. However, with winter around the corner, if this was the Drum Crossing female, we should see her again.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

6 YEARS 9 MONTHS

MALE CUB

1 YEAR 9 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Kikilezi female^t, orphaned on 22nd May 2017.

(6 sightings, 6 of female, 0 of female and cub, 0 of the cub)

Throughout the month of April, this female was spotted in various locations within her territory. On the 7th of April, she was seen around the Parking Bay, and on the 9th, she was spotted at Princess Alice Bush. Later in the month, from the 21st to the 23rd, she was seen at the entrance to Rattray's Camp with an impala ram kill. On the 28th of April, an altercation was witnessed between the Three Rivers female and Nkoveni on the Airstrip. Territorial battles are common between female leopards, and with the Nkoveni female keeping her cubs close to this area, it is no surprise these two territorial females were hostile towards one another. It is worth noting that the Three Rivers female appeared to be lactating during these sightings, suggesting that she may have given birth to cubs recently.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE

10 YEARS 8 MONTHS

CUBS

10 WEEKS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLY

*Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent early 2014.**Mother of the Plaque Rock female, Xinkhova female, and Stone Drift female.*

(17 sightings, 16 of the female, 1 of the female and cubs)

We were fortunate enough to view the Nkoveni female on 17 different days. On the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th, she was spotted south of the Causeway, and on the 7th and 8th, she was seen patrolling north of Maxim's Lookout. One of the most exciting sightings occurred on the 22nd, where we witnessed the first-ever visual of her 6-week-old cubs as she carried them to their new den somewhere east of the Windsock. It was a heart-warming sight and offered a glimpse into the life cycle of these elusive and magnificent creatures. However, on the 28th, the Nkoveni female was involved in a fight with the Three Rivers female just south of where we believe she is keeping her new litter. Thankfully, on the 29th, when she was spotted near the Settling Ponds, there were no apparent injuries from the altercation.

THE XINKHOVA FEMALE

2 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLY

Daughter of the Nkoveni female, independent last quarter of 2022.

(11 sightings)

In April, the Xinkhova female was observed on 11 different days, primarily within her mother's territory. On the 2nd, she was seen south of the Airstrip, and on the 4th, she had a stand-off with her sister, the Stone Drift female, at the Old Airstrip when both were unknowingly hunting the same herd of impala. The Stone Drift female was more confident, and the Xinkhova female retreated to the south. On the 11th, she was spotted around the Settling Ponds, and the following day, she was exploring when she was north of the Confluence of The Three Rivers. On the 22nd, she was seen at Fred's Tree. On the 30th, she had an impala ram kill hoisted on the southern parts of the Old Airstrip, not far from where her mother is denning her newest litter of cubs. As she and her sister mature, we expect to see more competition for resources.

THE STONE DRIFT FEMALE

2 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLY

Daughter of the Nkoveni female, semi-independent.

(13 sightings)

The Stone Drift Female was spotted on 13 different days in April, providing valuable insights into this young leopard's behaviour and movements. On the 2nd, she was seen at the Windssock, and on the 3rd, she was spotted south of the Causeway. Interestingly, her mother was also in the area, but minimal interaction was recorded between the two leopards. On the 4th, she was involved in an altercation with her sister, the Xinkhova female, and on the 6th, she explored the Piccadilly Triangle. Two days later, on the 8th, she had an impala ram kill north of the Causeway, and her presumed father, the Maxims male, was also in the area. On the 16th, she investigated the scraps left by the Island female around Kikilezihash Crossing. She remained east of the river, and on the 17th and 19th, she was seen at Maurice's Pan. Finally, on the 27th, she was spotted north of the Windssock.

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

9 YEARS 3 MONTHS

CUBS

0 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLY

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female[†], independent first quarter of 2016.**Mother of the Ngungwe female.*

(11 sightings, 3 of female, 7 of female and cubs, 1 of the cubs)

On the 1st, the mother and two cubs were south of Stwise, and on the 2nd, the mother was alone when she was seen north of Lower Mlowathi Crossing. On the 8th, the mother and both cubs were observed at Kigelia Crossing. On the 9th, the mother was alone at Mlowathi Koppies while the cubs were sighted south of Stwise. This was the last time that both cubs were seen together. On the 20th, the mother and one cub were seen feeding on the remains of an impala ram carcass west of Kigelia Crossing. The female and cub were south of Kigelia Crossing on the 21st. On the 26th and 27th, the mother and cub were seen south of Stwise. The female moved her den to the prominent rocks on Gowrie Trust Road, and both mother and cub were seen here on the 29th and 30th. These sightings demonstrate the movements and behaviour of the Piccadilly female and her cubs within their territory and highlight the importance of monitoring and understanding the movements of leopards and cubs within their habitat.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

9 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2016.**Mother of the Tlebe Rocks female, Langa female & Xaxa male.*

(1 sighting)

The Sibuye female was only seen on the 19th when she was east of Tlebe Rocks. She still has suckle marks, so the race is on to find where she is denning.

THE TLEBE ROCKS FEMALE

5 YEARS 3 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Sibuye Female, independent second quarter 2019.

(5 sightings)

We recorded five days' worth of sightings of this elusive female. She was west of Campbell Koppies on the 6th. On the 8th, she was south of Campbell Koppies. She was seen again on the 25th, when she was at Fred's Tree; she was just north of this on the 26th. The last sighting of her for the month was on the 30th when she was vocalising as she moved through Piccadilly Triangle. It is possible that this behaviour was a signal to any potential mates.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

± 13 YEARS 3 MONTHS

CUB

1 YEAR 0 MONTHS

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

*First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.**Mother of the Kapen female & the Redhawk male.*

(0 sighting, 0 of female, 0 of female and cub, 0 of the cub only)

There were no sightings of the Lookout female, or her cub this month.

THE PLAQUE ROCK FEMALE

5 YEARS 1 MONTH

WESTERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Nkoveni female, independent last quarter of 2019.

(2 sightings)

The oldest daughter of the Nkoveni female was seen twice this month. On both the 12th and the 18th, she was in the northern parts of the Old Airstrip. Although we only see this female a handful of times each month, it seems that she is shifting her territory and putting pressure on her mother.

MALE LEOPARDS

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 8 YEARS 8 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD & MALAMALA

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(5 sightings)

The Maxim's male lingered around the Causeway on the 6th, 7th, and 8th. On the 18th, he was at Wildebeest Crossing. The next and final time he was seen was on the 24th when he kept guard at the entrance to Rattray's Camp.

THE NGOBOSWAN MALE

5 YEARS 5 MONTHS

MARTHLY & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Son of the Emsagweni female', independent late 2019.

(1 sighting)

We only enjoyed one day of viewing this male, the 14th. On that day, he, and the Langa female, mated northeast of Campbell Koppies.

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 12 YEARS 8 MONTHS

EASTERN & CENTRAL MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.

(0 sightings)

For yet another month, we did not see this male. With the Split Rock male moving north, we have more reason to believe this old male might no longer be around.

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

8 YEARS 9 MONTHS

CHARLESTON

Son of the Ostrich Koppies female', independent latter half of 2015.

(3 sightings)

The movements of the Split Rock male continued to amaze us in April. He was seen on three occasions, each time further north than the time before. On the 12th, he was scent marking in the Tamboti Thickets. On the 26th, he was scent marking and vocalising around Buffalo Pans. Finally, on the 29th, he had an impala ram kill hoisted in Matshapiri Open Area. His increasing presence in central MalaMala, suggest that the Accipiter male is no longer protecting that territory.

THE FLAT ROCK MALE

10 YEARS 0 MONTHS

*MARTHLY**Son of the Porcupine female. First seen on MalaMala in early 2017.**(6 sightings)*

On the 9th of the month, he was spotted roaming the area north of the Confluence of the Three Rivers. Just a few days later, on the 13th, he was seen at Elephant Rock. He was next sighted on the 19th, at Manyeleti Crossing. On the 20th, he was found resting on the boulders on Gowrie Trust Road. On the 22nd, he had a terrifying encounter with a lioness who chased him up a tree in the northern parts of Piccadilly Triangle. Undeterred, the Flat Rock male was back in Piccadilly Triangle again on the 30th.

THE REDHAWK MALE

3 YEARS 7 MONTHS

*NOMADIC (central MalaMala and central Flockfield)**Son of the Lookout female, independent mid-2021.**(0 sightings)*

We did not see this young leopard in April.

Other Leopards Encountered:

- The **Kapen female** was seen on six days this month. On the 17th and 18th, she was with both cubs south of Styx Crossing, they had an impala ram kill in the area. On the 25th, she had an altercation with the Island female, who chased her south from Styx Crossing. The last time she was seen was on the 29th, when she was near Mamba Waterhole.
- On the 4th, the **2:3 YOUNG MALE** was seen in the Tamboti Thickets.
- The **LANGA FEMALE** was mating with the Ngoboswan male on the 14th, northeast of Campbell Koppies.
- The **RIVER ROCKS FEMALE** was harassed by a pack of Cape hunting dogs on the 24th, when both species were south of Charleston North Crossing. She has suckle marks.
- The **KANGELA MALE** made his first appearance on MalaMala when he was seen at Fred's Tree on the 26th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED	24 (6 cubs)
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CHEETAH

The first half of the month was very productive for cheetah viewing. In total, we enjoyed 15 cheetah sightings. All but one was of the young male that has been seen on the Western Bank. The 12th was the best day for cheetah viewing as a young male had an impala kill northeast of Princess Alice Pans while a female and two cubs were on the southern end of the Airstrip. On the 21st, the young male was chased by a Ndhzenga male around Flockfield Lookout.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	4
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

We had 10 sightings of Africa's second most endangered carnivore. The first sighting of the month was of a pack of seven at Bicycle Crossing on the 6th. On the 15th, two packs were seen, one just outside MalaMala Camp, and another around Flockfield Tower. The 26th was also a great day for Cape hunting dog sightings; again, two packs were seen, one around the 5-Star Junction, and another around the Old Borehole; this pack killed an adult impala. We saw both packs again on the 28th, one in Piccadilly Triangle and one around the Kapen River.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	45
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

51 sightings of Cape buffalo were enjoyed this month. Of these sightings, 10 were of large herds, and 41 were of small aggregations or lone bulls.

Sightings of elephants were abundant, we recorded 130 sightings of the largest mammal, 100 were of herds while 30 sightings included one or more bulls.

OTHER SIGHTINGS OF INTEREST

- We recorded three sightings of African wild cats this month. Two different sightings were had on the 13th, one at the Mlowathi Spot, and the other around Hyena Waterhole. The next time an African wild cat was seen was on the 23rd, on the Old Airstrip.
- Two days in April featured sightings of honey badgers. On the 17th one was seen around Maurice's Pan. On the 26th, a family of three were around the boulders on Baby Elephant Walk.